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Ibogaine in the 21st Century: Boosters, Tune-ups and Maintenance

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History

The history of using ibogaine to break the cycle of drug-dependence is relatively short. While it is likely that the CIBA pharmaceutical company and the US government were aware of ibogaine's anti-addictive properties as early as 1957, the anecdotal observations of Howard Lotsof in 1962 are generally accepted as the starting point, initiating waves of interest that have continued spreading since that date.

Reading through the early anecdotal literature, the overall tone is overwhelmingly positive. The experiences indicate instant and abrupt cessation of desire to use drugs, the idea being that you take ibogaine once and never want to use drugs again. It is hailed as a "cure" for addiction.

The problem with most of these reports is that they do not withstand the light of day, or correspond with our own experience. Over the last five years, we have treated a total of 45 individuals with ibogaine, for the specific purpose of breaking a cycle of drug dependence. The vast majority of these do not fall under the "instant cure" category. Four people could be categorized as such, having had extremely profound experiences, which facilitated complete cessation of their drug dependency after a single dose. The rest have required additional treatment or more formal follow-up care in order to maintain their goals. "One-hit wonders," it seems, are exceedingly rare in the 21st century.

There are a variety of factors which may account for the discrepancy between initial claims made for ibogaine and subsequent results. Firstly, the categorization of what constitutes a "junkie" is hugely variable. All heroin users eventually develop a tolerance, needing larger doses to achieve the same effect. Daily use combined with ever-increasing tolerance results in physical dependence. However, there is a significant difference between someone who is experimenting with drugs within a social context, and happens to become inadvertently drug-dependent, and a hardcore dope fiend who has been IV-ing heroin for 20 years and whose whole life revolves around junk. Early reports of individuals dosing with ibogaine may be paraphrased as, "I took ibogaine once, saw God, found myself, came down to Earth, food tasted great, I stopped smoking, starting experiencing life as I haven't since I was a child, and rode off into a rosy sunset."

Information regarding follow-up treatments is not publicized.

"I did ibogaine once, and was no longer an addict!"

is not followed up with, "Oh, and then I took it another 15 times that year for spiritual insight!"